

Your Honor,

I can only imagine the depth of your duties and obligations when you pass judgment. I hope only to use these pages to explain how this happened, not excuse or justify my role.

## My PTSD

I joined the Army in 1994, and deployed 3 times to fight in overseas conflicts. I accrued a basket of emotional trauma that ranged from the mild to the occasionally mentally crippling.

*TL;DR: By 2011, I sometimes felt like I was carrying an unstable bomb in my head. I was afraid to think the wrong thing or I'd accidentally light the fuse and then be 'stuck' for several days, perseverating on the mistakes I made, and second-guessing a lot of the work I did over there.*

Like many soldiers returning from war, I suffered from "regular" PTSD. Spending a year or more with constant elevated cortisol and adrenaline in the body affects the brain, and I consider myself lucky that my flashback episodes were relatively mild, and over the years dropped in frequency and intensity. I talked to therapists, and it was manageable. It's an odd sensation to suddenly be white-hot angry, scared, or hyper-vigilant, and *know full well that it has nothing to do with the person in front of you* but you still want to yell, punch them in the face, or shut down communication. I'm grateful for the therapy, tools, and help provided by Veterans Affairs (VA).

The more pernicious form of PTSD that increased over time that the VA seemed unable to help me with was related to my Military Intelligence duties.

Both in Iraq (2003-2005) and Afghanistan (2008-2009) I lead Human Intelligence (HUMINT) teams with the mission to make as many connections as possible in the local communities, create an intelligence-gathering network of local citizens, and then use those connections to gather intelligence on potential threats. The culmination of these efforts was to produce a Target Package that my team would present to the local Infantry/Cavalry/Marine Area of Operation (AO) commanders, along with our recommendation on whether this threat should be eliminated, and if so recommend one or more Courses Of Action (COA).

It took a few months to put together each Target Package. During that time I got to know a LOT about these targets. Where they worked, their family life, their "Insurgent" activity as well as the motivations for doing them, etc.

We referred to these Targets as “Tangoes” or “Bad Guys.” Without fail, the AO commanders decided to ‘take out’ every Target I researched. I even got a medal or two from the creative ways I helped trick these Targets to be in a location where a drone strike or Capture/Kill mission had minimal or no Collateral Damage.

The PTSD I suffered from came from the following realizations I had during my post-deployment years as memories and thoughts slowly connected.

- These men (they were all men) died because \*I\* believed they had built Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), shot at Coalition convoys, or held leadership positions in Militias or the Taliban. But looking back, all of that evidence came from someone telling me (or telling a source of mine who then told me) about their insurgent activities. I did my level best to have at least two sources corroborating the accusations before presenting a Target Package to a commander. Yet...
- The Commanders were more concerned that the “where will they be and when” part of the report had multiple sources, not “this is definitely a ‘Bad Guy’ part.
- The ‘evidence’ I had would be considered “hearsay” in a US Court of Law
- A byproduct of my research meant that I was intimately familiar with these men’s lives. The names of their wives, the names and ages of their children.
- I knew what these men believed. If they were Sunni or Shi’a muslim, and how that affected the when and where they would pray, and what they personally believed was their “Jihad” obligation in order to get into heaven.

Connecting these thoughts together over time, I had the following realizations:

- Even if I was 100% correct that my Targets were active threats to Coalition forces, they gave all outward appearances to be sincere in their beliefs, and probably died believing they were martyrs.
- They left behind children who grew up without a father. And these are children that are *overwhelmingly likely* to think of their father as a martyr, and blame the United States for their grief.
- The Militias and the Taliban used pictures and stories of these deaths as “proof” of religious persecution, and as a recruitment tool to radicalize moderate Muslims to become fighters to join their cause.

In America, the day after 9/11 there was a massive influx of volunteers at every recruiting station across the country. So why were we shocked that in Iraq and Afghanistan, every ‘successful’ military operation swelled the ranks of Al-Quada, ISIS, and the Taliban?

They say ‘Don’t bring knives to a gun fight.’ I was part of a system that brought **Drones to an Ideas fight.**

And \*MY\* actions, however noble I believed them to be at the time, *allowed the 'Bad Ideas' that started this war in the first place to be even **more** entrenched in the minds of "the Enemy."*

The PTSD effects I suffered from *these* thoughts were difficult to treat, or even describe. I talked to therapists, and we would take convoluted paths to wind up either at 1) "You didn't know any better at the time," or 2) "You have to let it go." But every time I heard a news story relating to the wars overseas, or the *brutal* oppression of Afghan Females under Taliban rule, or learned more about Muslim Apologetics (the arguments used internally in the religion to combat criticism), I'd have bouts of depression and doubt. It felt like the more I tried to "solve" this mental puzzle, the more certain I became that my efforts and dedication during my deployments weren't only "wasted," but were profoundly counterproductive.

**Your honor, having these thoughts felt like a mental prison. Talking about it to therapists made it worse. I learned to cope by pushing those thoughts away. Bottling up the guilt. Bottling up the frustration that there was *nothing I could do* to make things better. Not being able to change the past is a frustration, but feeling helpless to change the *present* and *future* were much more so.**

## Psilocybin - Immediate relief for me

My first experience with Psychedelic Mushrooms had a profound impact on me. For at least two years after that session I was able to THINK about those same doubts, fears, and ideas without triggering sensations of guilt and helplessness.

I still had those same thoughts, but it was like the negative emotional link was severed.

[See [Appendix A: Why I stayed in the Army, but shifted my military career from Military Intelligence to PSYOP](#) for an explanation of how this one mushroom experience affected my career path]

## A Road, Paved

### Decision to research mushrooms

[a frog in cool water]

I read a lot of books, articles, and forums about what, exactly, had happened in my brain during that trip. What neurochemical processes produced that experience. My research provided me

with the idea that others could benefit from the same relief I experienced, and seeded the idea that I could help them.

## Decision to grow mushrooms for personal use

[a frog in warm water]

I wanted to explore what I was learning, but I **had no idea how one acquired mushrooms**. No one in my family or social circle (at the time) had any interest that I knew of, and I wasn't comfortable asking around.

So I taught myself about mycology and fungal farming. I got the necessary equipment from Amazon.com for about \$250, and the *psilocybe cubensis* spores online for \$15.

## Decision to sell mushrooms on the Darknet

[a frog in hot water]

In the second half of 2014 I created the DarkNet Vendor account "TripWithScience," made a listing, and started shipping liquid mushrooms to customers.

I had expected that this product would be appreciated. I did not expect, however, the sheer volume of gratitude I began receiving from customers.

After about a week of selling, I received my first thank-you letter from a customer. I saved a lot of them, and would refer to them whenever I was feeling down.

*One of the most profound letters I received was about 6 months after I started vending. The customer told me that he had been a **daily user of heroin for 10 years**.*

*He described trying my Liquid Mushrooms, and deciding during his trip that he would stop Heroin cold turkey. He said the withdrawals the following days were bad, but not nearly as bad as they had been in the past. It was somehow manageable this time.*

*He said that the cravings just STOPPED for two weeks. After those two weeks when he started to yearn for another dose of heroin, he just took a vial of Mushrooms, and that pushed the addiction away for another two weeks.*

*He concluded his letter by saying that he was 2 months sober from heroin, a feat he had long believed to be impossible. His thanks were effusive.*

## Decision to hire other people, thus creating a DTO

[a frog in boiling water]

I'd been selling on the Darknet for several months, and demand was increasing. I knew my Uncle Rex TAYLOR was struggling to find work in his tiny town of Cedar City, Utah. I visited him and asked if he'd like to help. I paid him just \$2000 a month, which was enough for him and his dogs to live on in his frugal lifestyle.

Later I wanted some more help, and asked my dear friend Mo (Monet CARRIERE) if she'd be willing to help.

Over the years as orders increased I kept adding employees. In the end I had a team of about 7 people. We had a complex system of spreadsheets, automated scripts, and a secure slack-like app with different channels for different sections of the company.

The daily work could be tedious and thankless, so I created a separate channel in our messaging app entitled "#WINS!" to paste in feedback from customers for everyone to see. We got positive heart-felt messages almost every day from customers who **overcame addiction, had a relationship-deepening experience with their spouse, let go of emotional trauma/depression, find end-of-life joy (terminal patients), or a profoundly connective experience with friends** (see examples in [Appendix B - Letters from Customers](#)).

I know we were committing Felonies. I knew that there would be consequences if we were caught. But I kept doing it because we felt that this was making a difference, and of course there was financial gain.

## Remorse

By inviting people to work for me, I have ruined, or had profound negative effects on the lives of my codefendants. Some of these friendships may be ruined permanently.

I am wracked with guilt for leading them astray. I was SO cocky that 1) we wouldn't get caught, and 2) even if caught it wouldn't be that bad.

One of the things that has made me feel so lonely over the past year and a half is that when I try to tell people how I feel no one "gets it." I've heard over and over from friends (and lawyers) that I shouldn't beat myself up TOO much, since "They were all adults and knew what they were getting into."

But that glosses over how PERSUASIVE I was in convincing them to work for me. How I talked them into it because we would be making the world better. How they would be helping people overcome opioid addictions. How by providing Mushrooms to the world, we were giving tools to people to improve their mental health.

I showed all of them thank-you letters from customers, including that letter I had gotten from the customer who used our liquid shrooms to kick a decade-long heroin habit.

And I told them that even in the “extremely unlikely” event of us being caught, I confidently stated I could cover all their legal fees.

My hubris cost some of the people ***I care about most in the world*** to be imprisoned, fined, and forced to pay extravagant legal fees. Not to mention that they will have a Felony on their record for the rest of their lives.

Your Honor, none of my codefendants had prior criminal history. And if it wasn't for me they wouldn't have one now.

**I was wrong.** And I don't know if I can ever make it up to them. I couldn't cover their legal fees. I feel I couldn't keep any of the promises I made. They are all (I believe) financially worse off than when they started.

- Jennifer CAMPBELL
  - Lost access to her son, Atticus. He's such a sweet boy. I always loved visiting, because he was just so precocious, funny, and clever. Sometimes he'd be on the couch reading a book while the adults talked, then out of nowhere Atticus would raise his finger in the air and say “HEY! Do you know what we need? A DANCE PARTY!!!” And he'd put on music and get everyone to dance with him.
  - Her ex-husband had already made sharing custody with Atticus difficult. I worry that he will use her now-felony status to inhibit visitation.
- Matthew BARLOW
  - Lost access to Atticus. I know this is especially painful because Atticus has been calling him “Dad” for the past couple of years. Matthew has invested a LOT of time in learning about child development in order to be a good and responsible parental figure. He loved Atticus like a son. Several times Matthew and I would be sitting on the couch, watching Atticus be silly, and my brother would get misty eyed and say “I just love that kid. SO. MUCH.” And now? I worry that their relationship is either over, or permanently tarnished by being separated for several crucial years during Atticus' development.
  - *My understanding is that Matthew is being sentenced before I am. I know that a decision on an exact sentence won't be made until hearing all arguments, but if there is any way that he can be spared more prison time I'll accept a longer sentence if that satisfies the scales of justice. He's a powerfully positive man, and I don't want his light diminished in a penitentiary.*
  - *Last month he sent a video to the “Sibling Chat” group thread I share with my brothers and sisters. It was him singing along to the radio “I fought the law, and the LAW WON” followed by contagious laughter. He's a gem.*

- Rex TAYLOR
  - I hear that he paid a gut-wrenching fine of \$130k. That money was left to him when his parents (my grandparents) passed away. Before paying that fine he was set for a frugal life. Now I don't know if he has to come out of retirement and hunt for a job.
- Monet CARRIERE
  - She came from a dysfunctional family that has hurt her with their overly-judgemental comments when she was growing up... I flinch to imagine that she might get cruel comments about being a "felon."
  - When I saw her behind bars when I was first arrested my heart just broke. She only started working for me because she loved me and wanted to help when sales became a little more than I could handle. There's no chance that she ever would have broken the law if I hadn't been so selfish to ask her to help me.
  - I don't know what her legal bills were, but I know that she didn't have much, if anything, by way of savings. This probably wiped her and her boyfriend out.
- Amy MILLER
  - She only worked for me for a few months. But I promised her that if the police ever knocked on her door, I'd pay off her husband's Medical School student loans (~\$300k). I not only can't keep that promise, they are saddled with even *more* debt due to legal fees.
  - Amy comes from a VERY strict religious family. If she is now estranged it will be my fault.
- Ronnie BRUST
  - If he serves any time in prison he might be locked up when his mother passes away. I know they are close, and it would gut him to not be there by her side if her health continues to deteriorate.

I hope that I've come across as a sincere believer in the benefits of Mushrooms in society, and that belief is based on not just personal experience, but is supported by the overwhelming preponderance of studies done since the 1960s that looked at the harm/benefit of psilocybin.

I also hope that **I am VERY CLEAR in expressing my understanding that while mushrooms continue to be a Schedule I substance, any attempt to grow or cultivate them is a grave error in judgment** and US Law is quite clear on the consequences.

Given that I've forfeited my gains, I ask The Court to consider whether a sentence of 12 months would be appropriate.

I am aware that if I sell psilocybin again the punishments will be severe. My own mother and sister have told me that all the commissary deposits, books, and financial support I received after my arrest was a "one-time thing."

## Plans for Federal Incarceration

Since I will need a new career after I get out, I hope to be sent to a facility that has computers where I can practice some of my skills that need polishing before I can do them professionally again. Such as programming, video editing, copywriting, etc.

## Plans post-Prison

### Amazon Atlas

I do have a job lined up for when I'm out: Working for an [Amazon Arbitrage company](#) with my friend Blair GOLSON.

I anticipate about 20+ hours a week for a salary of \$2.5k/month. With this income, I'll have financial security to pursue some of the other entrepreneurial avenues that I've been putting on the back burner for the past year.

### NutraHQ.com

I have about \$14k in inventory for a nootropic health supplement I developed with the help of some PhD Nutritionists. I haven't been able to sell them since the business would take a year to get the advertising and sales funnel dialed in. If I'm out of Prison early enough that my inventory is still well out of its expiration date, I would like to revive my NutraHQ business and see if I can make it profitable again.

### Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu

I trained in Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu (BJJ) under [Master Pedro Sauer](#). I'm not great, but I'm good enough that I can possibly find a job at a BJJ academy that is looking for instructors at my skill level. At my current home in Las Vegas I have a 13' x 12' grappling area installed. I could rent out the space to other teachers who want to give privates.

### Teaching High School Science

THIS IS MY DREAM JOB. I've always said that "if money were no object" that would be my first pick. I know that I have a tendency to get emotionally involved with those around me, and believe that I can give it my all for at least 3 years before hitting emotional burnout.

I've been saving articles about teaching for years, and although I only had a couple months of experience as a substitute teacher, I loved it, and had a lot of success in ramping up my students' test scores.

I've written 5 lesson plans that I call "Firmware Upgrades." (See [Appendix C: Lesson Plans](#)). These are lessons intended to change the way High School level students think about a



particular topic, and challenge them to see if they truly understand things that they just memorized by rote for standard tests.

This year I was actively trying to get rehired as a substitute teacher. Unfortunately I wasn't able to pass a background check while my sentencing is pending. I was able to meet in person with several members of the Nevada Clark County School District (CCSD), and they said that if I could get past sentencing, and collect a few character references, I could be approved by the Superintendent for an exception to policy.

I have high hopes of passing their review board, since the CCSD is [woefully underfunded](#), and is hemorrhaging good teachers. I have the tenacity to keep applying until I get in.

### ***Creative Sentencing possible?***

In the '70s judges could sentence criminals to "join the Army or go to jail." Those times are gone, but are courts allowed to impose employment sentences?

If The Court decides that a multi-year sentence is appropriate, **can I be sentenced to spend those years in a public teaching job?** I submit that locking me in an underfunded High School for 3-5 years will save taxpayer money, and will be much more beneficial to the USA than if I am reading books in a cell. Having me teach would give the following advantages:

- The State would not have to spend money on incarceration.
- CCSD is the fifth-largest school district in the United States, yet its spending per-student is one of the lowest. I would be an influx of enthusiasm.
- **It would make a difference to the students.** I have taught in these schools and know that the students feel left behind. There's a lot of despair and it's "common knowledge" amongst students that "*they only get us smart enough to work in a casino.*" Everyone I've met who was educated in a CCSD school has heard this and believes it to be true to some degree. And it can be demoralizing.
- Since my freedom would depend on me not getting fired or quitting, It's a simple way for The Court to assure that I remain in good behavior.

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I'm prepared to expound on anything in this document when I am before The Court on Dec 7th.

My apologies for such a long document, I had a year to think about what I wanted to say... and I can be verbose at times.

Sincerely,

James V. Barlow  
Sergeant First Class (RET)

## Appendix A - Why I stayed in the Army, but shifted my military career from Military Intelligence to PSYOP

*TL;DR: In Military Intelligence, I realized I had little control over how that intelligence was used. I liked PSYOP because I could fight “Bad Ideas” directly and I could once again put 100% of my effort into a cause I believed in.*

During the years 1994-2012 I acquired the following Military Occupational Specialties:

- 35L: Counterintelligence Special Agent
- 35M: Human Intelligence Collector (Interrogator)
- 35N: Signals Intelligence Analyst

I chose the career path that would lead to becoming a Warrant Officer in these domains, and enjoyed the professional competition with a few of my peers of “who can learn the most to do the job the best.” I took Kinesis training, advanced Interrogation training/seminars, and read every book by Paul Ekman on reading faces, detecting emotion, and detecting deception. I am comfortable stating that I was regarded as a Subject Matter Expert (SME) by most soldiers who knew me. I loved my job, and loved the intellectual challenge it posed. I worked with an AMAZING Battalion, and had great pride in our soldiers.

After my first Mushroom session in 2011 I realized that as much as I LOVED my Leaders, Peers, and Subordinates, on my next deployment I couldn’t guarantee I’d be in a position to make the changes I felt were necessary to more effectively “win” these wars, and serve my country.

I ended up joining a Psychological Operations (PSYOP) Company in Las Vegas in 2014. It was a great fit for me, I liked to think it was the “opposite” of Military Intelligence: Instead of “squeezing heads for intel” we are tasked with studying/understanding a given Target Audience (TA) and putting information/ideas *into* their heads that changes their behavior.

PSYOP is:

- Dropping leaflets on opposing armies that convince them that the *honorable* thing to do is surrender, rather than fight.
- Convince Middle Eastern populations to participate in upcoming elections (rather than avoiding voting; letting the local Cleric/Warlord win by default)
- Get a population to be more vocal about their irritation with the local militia/Taliban, fostering the courage to stand up to them and drive them out of town.

In short, PSYOP fights *IDEAS*. And I think that fight is worth the effort.

That’s why I continued to serve in the Army even after I had my “20 years” for retirement, **AND after cryptocurrency investments (plus DTO income) made me independently wealthy.** I believed in our PSYOP mission and did my best to learn everything I could about the MOS, and train my assigned Detachment so that when the time for overseas deployment came, they would be able to navigate the politics of war and produce “PSYOP Products” that wouldn’t just be dismissed with an eye roll as “American propaganda” by the Afghan people, but would inspire behavioral change.

## Appendix B - Letters from Customers

We got messages like these every day. Over the years we received memorable letters how customers were able to overcome emotional trauma, treat depression, cure suicidal tendencies, overcome addiction, and allow families and committed partners to grow closer and develop deeper connections through a shared experience.

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Hi Trip. I recieved the delivery a few days ago. i was just having trouble with sending this message.

the shrooms were amazing. i was having alot of drug problems, and when i took the shrooms they made me relise

what i was doing with my life. the next morning i was happier then ever, my head was clear, and i had no more drug

cravings. my life made a 180 degree turn, and i cant thank you enough. if it wasnt for you i would still be heading down

a dark path. thank you so much.

-Gr00vy

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I just want to say thank you for liquid mushrooms. Before taking them i was on a two week binge of mdpv. At one point i started poping xanax and ativan. Then drinking. Then someone drugged me with methadone. And i have no opiate tolerance at all. I almost died. When i came to. I got away from theese people and rented a hotel room to myself so i could think clearly. During my stay i used your shrooms. I had the most clear headed thought i have ever had in my entire life. And thought about what led me to the point of almost dieing. I can say that your shrooms cured me. And possiably saved my life. I cant thank you enough. Peace

Liberty4all

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From a fawning fan, Phanja EV:Hey TWC, thank. you.

You are changing lives with your work. Thank you unendingly, you have given peace to a lifelong sick man that is very, very close to me, who has been suffering from depression. After a lifetime of non-working medicine, you have cured a chronically sick man.

I have you to thank largely for his peace that an endless supply of therapists and doctors have been unable to help fully.

His family is undoubtedly gracious for the unknown change as well.

Best of luck to you, and thank you for the role you have played in my life and the ones close to me.

## Appendix C - High School Lesson plans

1. **School increases your 'Software.' Can you update your 'Firmware'?**  
*Understanding your neuronal connections to learn ANYTHING faster; how to check that your worldview is self-correcting.*
2. **Scam people out of money at the mall (with Balance Bands and Ouija Boards)**  
*Understanding the Scientific Method from First Principles; designing a double blind study from scratch; how to overcome cognitive biases you don't even know about*
3. **YOUR Brain is a Stupid Lying Liar**  
*How memories are stored, why you can't draw a bicycle, and why pseudoscience is often more appealing than Science*
4. **People pop balloons, what you gonna do?**  
*Why we have/need governments (Political Science)*
5. **Rules for Rulers: Why politicians act like frickin' IDIOTS**  
*Understanding why rulers seem to behave counterintuitively; different constraints when seeking vs maintaining office; similarities and differences between dictatorships and democracies (Political Science)*